



Southern Regional Forest Conservancy District Board Meeting Minutes

Address: Virtual

Date: Tuesday May 19th 2026

Time: 5:00pm

DNR Executive Secretary: Alfred (Freddy) Bascom

1. Call to Order

- Justin (JT) Bowers, MFS Deputy Director, calls the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
- JT Bowers provides a welcome and DNR leadership address.

2. Roll Call

Regional Members:

- Autumn Phillips, Calvert
- Bud Reaves, Anne Arundel
- Daniel Donahue, Prince George's
- Robert Eaton, Charles
- **Not in attendance: Michael Sirk, St. Mary's**

At-Large Members

- Amalia Pleake-Tamm, Calvert
- Vacant seat
- Vacant seat

Guests:

- Anne Hairston-Strang
- Justin (JT) Bowers
- Dawn Balinski
- Emma Beck
- Daniel Coy
- Ryan Mayenschien
- Gabby Elliott
- Brian Stupak
- Anna Twigg
- Brandon Willey
- Broc Bowers

3. Approval of the Agenda

- The agenda was approved with no amendments.

4. Icebreaker Activity: Self-introductions: What motivated you to join your county board and what accomplishments are you most proud of? (2-3 minutes per person)

- **Autumn Phillips:** Autumn shared their motivation for joining the board upon moving to Calvert County 12 years ago, noting their pride in the board's ability to execute significant programming with a modest budget and a dedicated core team that works well together.



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- **Bud Reaves:** Bud shared their long-standing history with the board, spanning approximately 15 to 16 years. Bud got involved with the board when he was working for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, where he worked as Project Forester and served as his board's secretary. Bud highlighted his pride in the involvement with addressing invasive species and Anne Arundel County's Weed Warriors program.
- **Amalia Pleake-Tamm:** Amalia joined the Calvert County board when they started their role as an environmental planner for the Calvert County government. Amalia echoed Autumn's sentiment, stating that their board is a tight knit group and work well together to execute programs and workshops. Noting their passion for youth engagement through the county Arbor Day poster contest and the Envirothon.
- **Robert Eaton:** Bob shared their 38-year history with the board, noting that their interest was sparked by his friend Phil Griffith. Phil Griffith thought Bob may be interested in being a part of the Charles County forestry board and invited him to join. Bob expressed pride in their forestry tours which have worked with a variety of local groups, such as county leaders, science teachers, and students.
- **Daniel Donahue:** Dan Donahue noted their background in farming and logging, which motivated them to join the board to stay informed, learn more, and have his voice heard as a resident.

5. Maryland Forestry Foundation Updates, Q&A

- Dawn Balinski shared an update on Chapter Agreements, stating that the Maryland Forestry Foundation has received 12 signed chapter agreements and that they have started the process to get trade names for each county that has submitted their signed agreement.
 - Calvert County is the first county to have completed the transition from a standalone bank account to being under the nonprofit umbrella.
 - Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County have submitted their signed agreements and their trade name application has been submitted.
 - Awaiting signed agreements from Charles County and St. Mary's County.
- Emma Beck shared data on the Natural Resources Careers Camp (35 applicants, 26 accepted) with an Urban Forestry Careers Camp (19 applicants, 10 accepted)
 - Two Natural Resources Careers Camp applicants accepted from each of the following Southern Region counties: Anne Arundel, Calvert, and Prince George's
 - Question: Anne Hairston-Strang inquired about the Career Camps application process and asked, what makes the difference between applicants and applications that are more likely to move into the accepted category?
 - Emma Beck shared that they require two letters of recommendation for all student applicants, therefore letters of recommendations have not been received for the applicant or they are waiting for the interview phase for either the Natural Resources Careers Camp or Urban Forestry Careers Camp.

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- Emma Beck and Dawn Balinski discussed the upcoming four-year membership renewal cycle, noting they are considering a staggered regional approach and are currently verifying member status with individual boards

6. Approval of Minutes

- Not applicable; this was the first meeting of the Southern Region Forest Conservancy District Board

7. Reports of Officers

- Not applicable; this was the first meeting of the Southern Region Forest Conservancy District Board

8. Committee Reports

- Standing Committees
 - **Big Tree:** Emma Beck shared that there are updates under development to the Big Tree Program, including a new volunteer form and policy handbook.
 - **Membership Council:** Emma Beck shared that the Membership Council is now full, with Will Williams serving as the representative from Western MD.
- Special or Ad Hoc Committees
 - none

9. Report from Agencies

- none

10. Unfinished Business

n/a

11. Annual Work Plan Discussion

Discussion questions below:

- Each board briefly presents their draft Annual Work Plan. (3-5 minutes per person)
- What has your board done well, and how could that work be replicated by other boards?
- What consistently limits your board's effectiveness?
- Has your board worked with another board? What worked, and what didn't?

Calvert County Forestry Board (CAFB)

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- The CAFB will assist with recruitment for the Natural Resources Careers Camp by advertising on their website, with flyers, and at events.
 - The Calvert Forestry Board will be involved in supporting the Big Trees program and Calvert County Arbor Day Poster Contest
 - The CAFB plans to host an invasive species tour at the American Chestnut Land Trust which is available to the public to provide information about invasive species identification and control methods.
 - The CAFB plans to have a booth at the Calvert County Fair on Youth Day.
 - The CAFB plans to train kids at the County Envirothon.
 - The CAFB is planning a Winter movie night focused on encouraging engagement.
 - Amalia Pleake-Tamm expressed a desire for the board to expand outreach efforts to connect with residents beyond those who attend workshops, particularly targeting small landowners regarding invasive species and forest property management
 - Autumn Phillips shared a desire for the board to move beyond education toward on-the-ground implementation assistance for landowners, such as providing individualized site visits, small grants for invasive species removal, or funding support

Anne Arundel County Forestry Board (Aafb)

- The Aafb plans to execute multiple Weed Warriors events to address invasive species and support tree maintenance in the county. The board will be collaborating with the Watershed Stewards Academy's Tree Troops, AA Rec & Parks, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, and the Department of Public Works.
 - Providing hands on assistance
 - Providing education
 - Providing tools to support effective invasive species removal efforts
- Bud Reaves requested volunteer assistance for the State Envirothon Competition, scheduled for June 10th and 11th at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, MD, specifically seeking help for the training and testing days.

Prince George's County Forestry Board (PGFB)

- The PGFB is planning a Tree Tour at Darnall's Chance Historic & Museum in the Fall
- The PGFB will be sponsoring students to attend the Natural Resources Careers Camp
- Dan Donahue expressed goals to improve retention & recruitment, network with a variety of groups throughout the county, and support tree planting & maintenance efforts.

Charles County Forestry Board (CHFB)

- No report

St. Mary's County Forestry Board (SMFB)

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- No report

12. New Business

n/a

13. Announcements

- Anne Hairston-Strang introduced the availability of new landowner support funding derived from the Inflation Reduction Act, which will support forest management practices including invasive species control, prescribed burning, and thinning
- JT Bowers explained that as the regional boards mature, they will require a chair and vice chair, and that the secretary, Freddy, will coordinate agendas and minutes. Participants are encouraged to consider these officer roles for the future

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.